

## Infancy to Two and a Half Years

### Developmental Guidelines For Residence and Visitation Arrangements

Developmental Tasks	Child's Divorce Issues	Recommendations: Parents Living Close to Each Other	Recommendations: Parents Living Far Apart	Risks
<b>Infants</b> Build attachment to primary caretaker Form trust in the environment <b>Toddlers</b> Begin to develop a sense of independence Increased self awareness assisted by emergence of language and locomotion Growing capacity to use symbols for comforting self	Feeling of loss of contact with primary caretaking parent Feeling of loss of familiar and comfortable environment	Select primary residence based on caretaking history Non-residential parent has short, frequent visits daily depending on availability and caretaking history If dual primary parents, share daytime caretaking, establish one nighttime caretaker Overnights are not recommended	One parent travels to the residence of the other to enable non-residential parent to have daily short visitation Maintain long-distance relationship (see Appendix C)	Feeling of loss of contact with primary parent results in symptoms of depression and regression (acting younger) Too long a separation from primary caretaker may result in problems with separation and relationship capacity in later stages of development

## Two and a Half to Five Years

### Developmental Guidelines For Residence and Visitation Arrangements

Developmental Tasks	Child's Divorce Issues	Recommendations: Parents Living Close to Each Other	Recommendations: Parents Living Far Apart	Risks
Continued growth of individuality Capacity to hold absent parent in mind to comfort self for extended periods Verbal skills develop for expression of feelings and needs Regulation and mastery of emotions and bodily functions Increasing identification with same-sex parent	Magical thinking resulting in sense of responsibility for divorce Anxiety around basic needs being met—feeding, shelter, visitation logistics, and abandonment Fantasizes intact family and denies divorce Fantasies and actions relating to reuniting of parents Transition difficulties in moving between households can be expected	Time initially distributed in proportion to parent's direct caretaking prior to divorce May introduce longer visitation periods for child gradually throughout this stage to a maximum of a split week Implement overnights for child—1 per week initially, extend to a maximum of 3 per week toward the end of this stage Long-weekend, short-weekend concept, preferably including a weekday visit, is a possibility if one parent works full time during the week and the other does not	One parent travels to the residence area of the other Child overnights—2 to 3 days maximum Must have encouragement and help to maintain essential phone and letter contact with absent parent between visits Carry photographs, transitional objects, and memorabilia of absent parent	Losing mastery of developmental tasks previously mastered Loss of opposite-sex parent as socialization agent or loss of same-sex parent as identification model Experiencing feelings of abandonment may result in sadness, depression, low self-esteem, and interference with development Carrying power struggles characteristic of this age to late phases of development

## Six to Eight Years

### Developmental Guidelines For Residence and Visitation Arrangements

Developmental Tasks	Child's Divorce Issues	Recommendations: Parents Living Close to Each Other	Recommendations: Parents Living Far Apart	Risks
<p>Developing peer and community relationships</p> <p>Moral development</p> <p>Empathy, greater internal regulation of impulses</p> <p>Self-concept development around competence and mastery</p>	<p>Prevailing sadness</p> <p>Direct expression of pain and anger</p> <p>Fears around money, food, and a place to live</p> <p>Fear of losing both parents</p> <p>Self blame manifested by feelings of responsibility and attempts to reunite parents</p>	<p>Many children still require a home base</p> <p>Child visits from 1 to 3 days weekly with non-residential parent</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Alternating half weeks at each parent's home if consistent contact with community, peer group, school and extracurricular activities can be maintained</p> <p>Child could have multiple overnights</p> <p>Full week at each parent's home can be phased in toward older end of this stage</p>	<p>With history of attachment and involvement with out-of-state parent, child can phase in travel alone for up to two week-long visits (summer, Christmas and spring break)</p> <p>Distant parent may have frequent week-long visits, including overnights, in the geographic area of the child's primary residence area if parents' finances and work schedules permit. During these visits maintain the child's consistent contact with community, peer group, school and extracurricular activities</p> <p>Child must have permission and help to maintain essential phone and letter contact with absent parent between visits</p> <p>Visits may be longer (up to 4 weeks) toward older end of stage or if accompanying older sibling and formerly very involved non-residential parent, especially if children are visiting an area in which they have previously resided</p> <p>Homesickness possible. May need to curtail lengthy visits</p>	<p>Achievement at school and learning affected</p> <p>Long-term depression</p> <p>Preoccupation with divorce</p> <p>Acting out around theme of parents reuniting</p>

## Nine to Twelve Years

### Developmental Guidelines For Residence and Visitation Arrangements

Developmental Tasks	Child's Divorce Issues	Recommendations: Parents Living Close to Each Other	Recommendations: Parents Living Far Apart	Risks
<p>Proficiency in skill areas: academic, athletic, artistic, community activity</p> <p>Developing an increased awareness of self, evaluating own strengths and weaknesses as compared to others</p> <p>Fitting in to the peer-level social order</p>	<p>Empathic understanding of one or both parents with possible intense condemnation for one parent</p> <p>Demanding adequate adult-level explanations</p> <p>Aware of own rejection and vulnerability; obvious and sustained feelings of sadness, anger and hurt</p> <p>Possible sense of shame in community</p>	<p>One home base with specific evenings, weekends, and activities at the other home scheduled for regularity and predictability</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Equal basis with each parent is possible, up to 2 weeks in each residence</p> <p>Maintain accessibility to school, peers, extracurricular and community involvements from both homes</p> <p>"Nesting": both parents moving in and out of same residence is another possibility</p> <p>Presuming close relationship, summers may be split 50-50 approximately 4 to 6 weeks in one block</p>	<p>One home base with one to three weekend visits per month at other home, depending on distance and capacity to travel</p> <p>Non-residential parent will travel to home base to involve self with teachers, instructors, to attend performances and important events</p> <p>Half of Christmas break, all of spring break with non-residential parent</p> <p>If too far for regular weekends, then Thanksgiving and Presidents' Day weekend with non-residential parent</p> <p>Presuming close relationship exists, summers may be split 50-50, approximately 4 to 6 weeks in one block</p>	<p>Academic interference</p> <p>Possible lying or other deceptive behavior</p> <p>Forming too close an alliance with one parent against the other</p> <p>Loneliness, depression, low self-esteem</p>

## Thirteen to Eighteen Years

### Developmental Guidelines For Residence and Visitation Arrangements

Developmental Tasks	Child's Divorce Issues	Recommendations: Parents Living Close to Each Other	Recommendations: Parents Living Far Apart	Risks
Psychological emancipation: further solidifying identity	No intact family from which to emancipate results in accelerated emancipation	One home base with specific evenings, weekends, and activities at the other home scheduled for regularity and predictability	One home base with 1 to 3 weekend visits per month at other home, depending on distance and capacity to travel	Possible acting out: drugs, sex, religion to attain a sense of belonging
Mourning the loss of childhood, dependency, protection within the family	Possible de-idealization of one or both parents	OR	Establish "permanent schedule" with some flexibility built in	Delayed entry into adolescence
Handling sexual feelings	Embarrassment about family	Equal basis with each parent is possible, up to two weeks in each residence	Adolescent input essential, adolescent cannot be forced into schedule he/she had no involvement in creating	Doubts about own relationship capacity: too much investment in relationships or withdrawal from relationships
Establishing sense of self vis-a-vis rules and regulations of society	Distress over parents' more obvious sexuality	OR	Non-residential parent will travel to home base to involve self with teachers, instructors, to attend performances and important events	
	Child will place peer needs ahead of family and therefore may not want to visit	"Nesting": both parents moving in and out of same residence is another possibility	Half of Christmas break, all of spring break with non-residential parent	
		Establish "permanent schedule" with some flexibility built in	If too far for regular weekends, then Thanksgiving and Presidents' Day weekend as well as entire summer spent with non-residential parent	
		Adolescent input essential, adolescent cannot be forced into schedule he/she had no involvement in creating		
		Maintain child's accessibility to school, peers, extracurricular and community involvements from both homes		